

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

21st March, 1945

DEAR MEMBER,

A letter to *The Times* last July from Lady Allen of Hurtwood opened a discussion which resulted in the appointment last month of a Government Commission of enquiry into the provision made for homeless children. In a long and vigorous correspondence two dominant notes were struck—first, that even a not very good natural home is better than the most carefully designed substitute, and second, that these children, who for one reason or another, fall outside the normal pattern of society, are the responsibility of all of us.

HOMELESS CHILDREN

There are 100,000 children in this country who are temporarily or permanently deprived of ordinary family life, and for whom substitute homes have to be found. This very large figure is made up in the following ways—orphans; illegitimate children (there were 43,000 illegitimate births in 1943); destitute children whose parents are for one reason or another unable to support them (about half receiving outdoor relief); criminally neglected children (in 1943-44, 107,047 cases were brought to the notice of the N.S.P.C.C. and 1,000 convictions were made for cruelty to, or neglect of, children); children with broken homes (14,617 divorce petitions were filed in 1943-44); children of neurotic parents; physically and mentally handicapped children. Of these 100,000, one-third are in voluntary institutions; others are boarded out with foster-parents, adopted, or cared for, for longer or shorter periods, in institutions under local authorities or government departments. To disentangle the responsibilities of the Home Office, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Pensions, and to examine the means (mostly quite fortuitous) by which a child finds himself in this or that home, or with foster-parents, would take the space of many News-Letters. There are children from all the above categories in the care of the State; there are, equally, children of all types in the care of voluntary organizations.

Even before the Commission reports, the main facts are already clear—the number of children without homes is increasing; the means for coping with them are inadequate in quantity and deficient in quality. Many of these children have undergone experiences

which have unfitted them for being normal members of society—they have to be restored.

In the large and complex problem which the Commission has to tackle one thing is clear: our object must be to give to every child the nearest possible substitute for a normal home. That, however, leaves us to answer the question: "What are the essentials of a normal home?" Food, fresh air, shelter, clothing, discipline, training, companionship—all these the institution child has, sometimes in greater measure than the child in the very poor family, yet the fact remains that many children from institutions are maladjusted in one way or another and most of them feel a sense of loss. We have already drawn attention in the News-Letter to the careful studies conducted by Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham into the behaviour of young children brought up away from their families.¹ Their conclusion is that unless the emotional attachment which children feel for their parents is replaced by a similar attachment to another person the emotional side of a child's nature is not developed or controlled, education is retarded and the results in after life are likely to be very serious, both for the child and for society.

The Provisional National Council for Mental Health has recently issued an illuminating statement² on the care of children brought up away from their own homes, which lays stress upon much the same points. "Family feeling," says the Council, "is the basis of society and anything which threatens its strength attacks the structure on which civilization depends. . . . Continuity of care by a loving adult is particularly important in the early years when the foundations of mental health are laid." Contrast with this "continuity of care by a loving adult" the children in one institution whose "hands are washed by one nurse, dried by another and hair combed by a third"; and others in a children's home who were "so starved of affection, so longing for a little individual attention that they would undo shoe-laces to obtain it," and the remark of a Master of a well-run Home, referring to the children's lack of anybody to be specially pleased at any of their attainments, "Nobody knows until they live in a place like this the tragedy of the lives of such children, even under the greatly improved conditions we have here."³

"We want," says the Council for Mental Health, "to get back to the very simple, lasting things which we know are overlooked in our preoccupation with finding ways and means for immediate problems." The Commission has to find its way through a criss-

¹ *Young Children in War-time and Infants without Families*. Published by Allen & Unwin. Prices 1s., 6d. and 3s. 6d. respectively.

² 38 Queen Anne Street, Wimpole Street, London, W. 1.

³ *Whose Children?* Lady Allen of Hurtwood. Simpkin, Marshall Ltd., 12 Old Bailey, London, E.C. 4. 1s., by post 1s. 2d.

cross of ministerial responsibilities, to review and suggest radical improvements in the methods by which children reach one or another kind of institution, to discuss staffing, training, management and a thousand other ways and means. The root need is that these children may receive these "very simple, lasting things" which make up human affection. In a single year (1941) over two million pounds in contributions and legacies was given to voluntary homes and institutions for young people, of which the large majority are Christian foundations. They need every penny of it. But when we have given charity we have not necessarily given love, although we may have regarded it as an adequate substitute. We hope that the Commission will not put all its faith in training, inspection and the like, but that it will recommend ways and means by which the high walls which surround the children in institutions may be lowered so that we who are parents in ordinary homes may go in to them and become part of their life, and they may come out to us, sharing our home life, holidays and family affection.

Outside the scope of the Commission's enquiry lies the equally urgent question "How can we *reduce* this large figure of 100,000 children, or at least how can we prevent it from increasing?" For the numbers are increasing in many categories. War makes orphans. It increases the number of illegitimate children. Cruelty to children has diminished, neglect has very greatly increased during the war. "You would go to prison," said a magistrate in a Northern court to parents charged with neglect, "if there were any place to send your children," and how many other magistrates have stayed their hands knowing that parents will return from prison chastened but unimproved? Broken families have increased in numbers. We are in fact having to face an increase in the numbers of children whose adjustment to society is going to be made difficult by the fact that they have been let down by their parents and suffer a permanent sense of injustice.

No single factor in creating healthy family life is more important than housing, and the comparative complacency with which we accept the present slow rate of progress in reconditioning and new building is alarming. In every large city housing conditions are conspicuously worse than they were before the war; in conditions such as these, talk of good family life is beside the point, for bad homes breed bad parents.

FOOD—AND QUICKLY

The news about the conditions under which people are living in parts of the liberated countries, which comes to us in ever-increasing volume through the medium of the press and the B.B.C. and from the personal observations of men now returning on leave, is very disturbing. The lack of food, fuel and clothing is severe.

The effects are likely to be embittering. This is not what they had expected "liberation" to be, and the long talk of vast stocks prepared for their use, of equipment and personnel for distribution, gathered in great strength by UNRRA and by voluntary societies, seem to have resulted in nothing.

The transport necessary to distribute more evenly what is already on the Continent, and what can be sent, is practically non-existent. The burden on shipping of supplying the huge armies both on the western borders of Germany and in the Far East is enormous. We are also being made aware that we are running into a world shortage of food (especially fats), clothing and fuel. Many of us feel that it is an essential part of our Christian faith that we should share what we have with others ; we dislike the fact that our own rations are fixed at a higher calorific value than those of our allies ; we have the gravest apprehensions that present misery is likely to produce future discontents ; we know that in some places children are delving in garbage tins, begging and stealing. We are frustrated by our impotence. We cannot deflect shipping : we cannot even say that it ought to be deflected, for we do not know the facts. There is only one thing which we can do. There are voices raised which say that this country has endured five years of shortage and cannot reasonably be expected to endure more. There ought to be voices raised which say that some of us are ready for prolonged sacrifices if they are needed, and which urge that delay in carrying help is horribly dangerous. There cannot be a sharp division of military and civilian needs without jeopardizing the future. A strong expression of our desire and our will to back it with continued or more stringent rationing should be made through local councils of churches and voluntary associations to Members of Parliament.

THE UNIVERSAL SPIRITUAL WAR

The struggle between the forces of light and darkness, life and death, the war behind the war, is being waged not only in Europe, but the world over. The tide of battle ebbs and flows, but it is one battle, and what is happening in the Far East is not irrelevant to concerns which press on us with more immediacy in the West.

The Bishop of Hong Kong, now in Western China, writes :—

" The worst thing Japan has done has not been all the direct misery and suffering of the war, but the breaking down of what the new Chinese Government had so laboriously built up in the short ten years from 1927 to 1937—the breaking down of law and order and the beginnings of good government. We hear on all sides of the terrible increase in corruption in army and government in the last three long years of war, when every man, haunted by the ghastly insecurity of life, with a falling currency and a long drawn

war has set out to make sure in whatever way is possible that his own wife and children do not starve (no officer or Government official can support even one child on his official salary, and to increase their salaries would mean such an increase in note circulation that prices would always keep ahead of the increase).

“One of the saddest sights I have yet seen was on the road side two days ago. A refugee laden truck coming out of Linchow (Kwangtung) had been shot up at 8 o’clock the night before. The driver was hit and was lying dead beside the overturned truck. Three dead passengers included a little boy of ten with half his face shot away, several wounded had been taken to a near-by village. A surviving passenger told us that he estimated twenty home-made rifles had opened on them at once from the rock hills which almost touch the road at that point.

“All through the early days of the war trucks passed by night up and down that road to escape the Japanese planes which harassed it by day, and in those days I heard no story of bandits. But now in Kwangsi and Kweichow and the Yunnan border it is a different story. Every village has its own home-guard, with home-made rifles organized against their fellow-countrymen. Poverty, deserting soldiers, general insecurity and confusion, and now in Kwangsi preoccupation with war, gives the opportunity for the banditry, so painfully suppressed since 1927, to grow again in this country of few roads and endless hills, in which it is difficult to maintain law and order even in days of peace.

“These two years back in China have been heartbreaking and sobering. We all feel years older. News from Hong Kong is always saddening as we hear of difficulties, illness and the long-drawn misery of internment. But the tragedy of China herself has been the most heartbreaking. There are too few Christians. The leaven in the lump is not enough. The new ways had not got strongly enough rooted to stand the strain of this long war. The heroic days of 1937 and 1938 are almost forgotten. There are many heroes still, and fine things being done. The miracle is that the house of China still stands and that the cracks in the wall are not more serious.

“The great public virtues of China and Japan, corrupted by evil, are responsible for all this evil. Familyism—family loyalty, family devotion and responsibility—has been God’s great gift to China, and surely in Japan similarly patriotism is God’s good gift to her. But with Japanese patriotism and with Chinese familyism the devil seems to have the last word—patriotism has become aggression, and familyism leads straight to corruption and bad government, for the family still matters more in China than the nation.”

An old friend of the News-Letter in India writes, “The News-Letter is splendid and has to be read as soon as it arrives, in spite

of all the other things which there never seems to be time to read!" He continues: "Here in this temple city life moves from festival to festival. In spite of the appalling conditions of travel pilgrims still throng the station platform, and mingle with the local crowds when the gods are carried round the temple precincts and the city streets. Brahmins still march down the streets behind and before the idols, chanting the ancient litanies of the Vedas, and marching with the step of hereditary lords of heaven and earth. Our local Congress leader is in gaol, but was out for a few days and we had a chat about prison conditions, all very friendly and courteous. Muslims are too small a minority to take a hand in local politics, but the Brahmin-non-Brahmin split is everywhere. In one's cynical moments one is inclined to feel that every one of the new civic ventures which from time to time sprout and wither away is just a new way of holding the ring for the old, old squabble.

"I confess that I come back every time to the Church as the only place where there is a rock foundation. Let me hasten to say that I don't mean anything so foolish as that Christianity is a significant political force in India. That is an idea only tenable at a distance of several thousand miles. The significant political forces are Congress nationalism, Muslim nationalism and Marxist universalism. Doubtless these are the forces that are going to shape the immediate future—in so far as ideas do shape things at all. But one comes back to the Church, divided and half-hearted as it is, with the sense, strengthened by every year that passes, that here is something being built to endure, something which is most certainly a rock of offence to all parties, but something which will prove in the end to be the corner-stone. One should add that there is a refreshingly realistic awareness among many Christian leaders of the treatment that the Church is likely to get in the future, together with an equally refreshing perception that the future struggle for the Church's existence in a pagan society cannot be avoided by relying on the British connection. In this matter the National Christian Council has given a notable lead.

"The number of our village men at the war goes on growing. They are all over the battle fronts, learning all kinds of jobs and facing all kinds of experiences. Lads who had never been in a railway train are now driving military lorries in Italy, the Near East, Burma and Ceylon. For the most part they are tremendously keen to keep up their Christian devotion and fellowship, and since they are generally without a chaplain they see to it themselves."

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

FULL EMPLOYMENT AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIANS

The Supplement in the last issue raises two important questions, which are not of the same order. The first is, what are the prospects of success of the Government's scheme for ensuring permanent full employment, and what is likely to happen if the operation of the scheme is not wholly successful. The second is, whether all Christians are under the obligation to support the scheme. Civis is extremely pessimistic in his expectations for the scheme if it does not receive full Christian support ; and it is for this reason that he demands this support. In his treatment, these two questions are handled in such a way as to obscure rather than illuminate each other. I must attempt to clarify his views about the prospects for this measure before proceeding to the question which more directly concerns Christians.

Early in his argument, Civis cites the examples of the Russian and the German systems as evidence that the evil of mass unemployment can be cured. He proceeds to say, " But in our own country also some economists (notably J. M. Keynes) were expounding during the inter-war period, with increasing confidence and with a widening circle of assent, the view that mass unemployment could be avoided without sacrificing the essentials of freedom or of our democratic ideals, if all concerned with the management of our economic affairs had the courage and wisdom to apply certain principles of policy." I call attention to the fact that the author disagrees with Lord Keynes, and the other economists quoted, on two points : first, he does not believe that it is enough for those concerned with the *management* of our economic affairs to exhibit moral and intellectual virtues—he thinks that a severe moral effort must be made by *everybody*. And second, the demand upon everybody is not simply for courage and wisdom—it is for a very high degree of self-sacrifice, indeed for the moral virtues, in the social order of the most convinced and devoted Christian. Neither Lord Keynes nor Sir William Beveridge could possibly admit that the feasibility of their designs was to this degree contingent upon the moral virtue of the nation. To do so would be to recognize such a serious weakness in their plans as would, if confessed by the proposers, ensure the defeat of any measure in Parliament. Lord Keynes and the other economists have, therefore, the strongest grounds for objecting to this qualification of their schemes, and I do not see how they could fail to do so.

WHAT HAPPENS IF PUBLIC SPIRIT FALLS SHORT?

Let us consider all the conditions which Civis attaches to the success of the proposed measures. He tells us that success is "partly dependent upon effective collaboration among the nations": we are entitled to presume that for this collaboration moral virtues will have to be exhibited by the men and women of the other nations, similar to those for which he calls from us. What is asked for, first, is "a degree of self-discipline and self-confidence which this country has never yet shown except in time of war." From such dangers as inflation we can only be preserved by a combination of "courage and good sense." We must, indeed, show a degree and a universality of public spirit such as has never been known—except in time of war. The policy will not work unless "miracles of daring, mutual confidence, public spirit, intelligence and self-discipline are daily wrought by ordinary men and women in many different walks of life." There is, of course, a journalistic sense in which "miracles" are performed daily; but Civis is a Christian, and for him, therefore, a "miracle" must mean a good deal more than that; yet, on the other hand, his own notion of miracle is not quite clear. For he says that "as Christians we claim to have a reasonable and dynamic faith in the possibility of *just such miracles as these*" (italics mine). I do not know whether there is a precedent in Christian history for just such miracles as these: to judge from Civis' account, the precedents for such miracles, imperfect as they are, have occurred in English history rather from the emergency of war than from Christian faith. But Civis must know that a miracle, in the Christian sense, is worked through human agency but by divine operation: it is a gift of Grace—something which cannot be brought about simply by our saying to ourselves: "we must work miracles."

It is worth while, I think, to enquire why all the "new and ardent incentives," for which Civis calls, will be necessary. We are not faced with a measure, or a series of measures, which, if it proves a failure, will be rescinded or become a dead letter. We may continue to get our full employment; but if we are not supplied with the new and ardent incentives to make the measure work, we shall have to be *forced*, and then what become of "the essentials of freedom" and "our democratic ideals"? This seems to me the essence of the writer's persuasion; and if this is not his meaning, I do not know what he means. It is apparent in phrase after phrase. We are exhorted to display *self-sacrifice*. Private enterprise will be *encouraged* to contract or expand its capital expenditure; when it fails to respond to encouragement, I suspect that what is meant is that it will be disciplined *pour encourager les autres*. City councils must make it their business to consider the wider interests of the

nation, *as interpreted* by the Central Government. People in Birmingham must recognize that they have a *common interest* with South Wales. We must learn to think of the Government as "we" and not as "they"—for most people, a considerable feat of imagination. Business men must abandon the "mixed feelings of fear and contempt" which they ordinarily entertain towards the State. And workmen must work, and business men take risks and initiatives, for "new and ardent incentives."

It should be added (as Civis does not point out) that we must learn to subordinate not only our local interests to those of Britain, but those of Britain to those of humanity at large. For as effective co-operation within the nation demands this subordination of interests, so the "effective collaboration among the nations" will demand subordination of national interests; and as the arbiter between our local interests is the National Government, so the arbiter between the national interests will have to be some Central Authority which has not yet taken shape.

Civis is aware that it is very unlikely that the majority of people will be ready so to subordinate their private and local aims—or indeed to surrender their private and local judgment: hence his exhortation to Christians to set the standard. And to do this, they must be animated by the spirit of a "Holy War." Now, the number of Christians in this country, professing and practising, is generally held to be a small minority; of these again, we can hardly expect more than a minority to be sturdy enough to dedicate themselves to a Holy War; and of those who are sufficiently rugged, only a minority again may have the acumen and address for estimating particular situations and taking the right action in every one of them. And we are not mustered for a mere Thermopylae, but for an active and aggressive campaign with no end. This small army, furthermore, will be hampered by an embarrassment of which Civis does not seem to be aware. Unless they have on their side the distinguished economists who have conceived and elaborated the scheme, they will find the sloth of the general public confirmed by the assurances of the experts. It would be a very surprising admission if those who had designed a machine intended to run on ordinary fuel confessed that after all a special Christian motor-spirit was necessary. The designers, certainly, are entitled to expect the ordinary degree of decency in the community; beyond that, they may make a reasoned appeal to intelligent self-interest, and even to an enlarged self-interest in which the individual will identify himself both with the nation and with posterity. And they will do well to appeal also to fear: fear of national weakness against enemies, fear of weakness in the economic competition which is another kind of warfare, fear of all the disastrous consequences of

unemployment, which it does not need a Christian training to perceive or a Christian conscience to deplore. And this fear must be presented in such terms that the individual will fear for himself, the more social person will fear for his family, the more public-spirited person will fear for his local community: for fear is the most certain persuader of men to make sacrifices. And if this is still not enough, and nothing less than the inspiration of Christian feeling throughout the country is necessary, then Sir William Beveridge, and Lord Keynes, and the other economists, and the responsible Ministers, must stand up and tell the country the truth.

CHRISTIAN DUTY IN SOCIAL AFFAIRS

On the other hand, we must ask whether it is obligatory on Christians to give such whole-hearted support as Civis exhorts us to give. To some Christians, the scheme for full employment may seem *relatively* good. It may be good on certain assumptions, or in certain circumstances which we may regret but cannot help. It might be that the best that could be said for any such scheme would be that it made the best of a bad job. As interpreted by Civis, it would appear to be conceived primarily in terms of factory employment, and to postulate an increasing concentration upon industrial effort. Employers, we are told, must look to "larger output rather than higher prices"—excellent, no doubt, in some industries; but in others that might result in quantity at the expense of quality. "That the productive resources of the nation," says the writer, "in men and materials, should be fully employed is a good and necessary objective of public policy." But if, when we say "productive resources," we are thinking of our capacity for making material objects, is this a noble aim in itself? Is it a Christian aim? And if you try to include, in "productive resources," our resources for producing all the manifestations of a higher culture and a more spiritual life, it is going to be very awkward for your economists to provide a scheme which will include these. But if not, then the concept of "fullness of life" for all men, which is set before us, is not much more comprehensive than that of fullness of stomach—a very good aim so far as it goes, so long as we pay attention also to the quality of the food that is to go into stomachs. I am *not* suggesting that Christians should disparage, still less obstruct, this or any particular scheme for ending unemployment, though they may see a danger of regarding employment as an end instead of a means. The writer's hypothetical Christian, who would have the effrontery to declare that "unemployment was not an evil which he had any responsibility to mitigate or eradicate if he could," is a figure of purely rhetorical value who should not have been introduced at all. There may have been Christians, there may still be Christians and non-Christians, who believe the problem

to be insoluble : if so, that belief appears, on the face of it, to be a weakness of the head rather than the heart, though indifference may dispose them to the belief. There are probably more who see the problem of unemployment in such a wide context, interwoven with such other major issues, that any White Paper scheme will seem to them only a kind of road-repair—necessary, at best, to enable us to get the car to a garage, unless it collapses completely before we get it there. Christians who see the matter in this light may still support the scheme, but will be in no frame of mind to talk of a Holy War : there may be more radical changes which seem to them more important still.

The Supplement which I have been discussing raises in the end an issue much larger than that with which it deals. This question is not merely that of what we think about a particular measure for combating a particular evil, great as that evil may be. It is the question of the attitude of the Christian, and of the Church, towards reforms and experiments undertaken by the temporal power for temporal ends. There are, of course, those who abstain or equivocate merely because they do not want to back the wrong horse : I am not speaking for them. Their motive is unworthy, though there is no reason why the Christian should be less shrewd or prudent in speculation than anybody else. No one can deny that it is the duty of the Christian to concern himself with the eradication both of the evils of which unemployment is the symptom, and of the evils which it brings about. In practice, the duty to "take action" about them will vary according to the position, the influence, the intelligence and the knowledge of the individual Christian ; but we may say generally that it is the duty of the individual to do what he can in his own sphere of action. But Civis, I think, comes very near to saying that it is the duty of every Christian to support a particular measure. What he has written may be taken in this sense by some of his readers, who may infer, not that it is their duty to think about it and to weigh its consequences, but their absolute duty to support this measure, and to support it without reservations—and this absolute duty would absolve them from the more irksome duty of thinking for themselves. Now, an obligation which had this absolute application to all Christians would be an obligation upon the Church. The Church, as represented by theological and administrative authority, can only direct its members to pursue a particular course of action when no other course is compatible with one or more of the doctrines which the individual must profess to believe as a condition of being in communion with the Church. What Civis is dangerously near to saying—so near that some readers may think that he has said it, and accept it as true—is this : "this scheme for full employment

provides the *only* means by which it is possible for the Christian to fulfil an important part of his duty towards his neighbour: therefore all Christians must support it." But this would be to introduce a new and fatal principle. It would mean that a group of economists, laymen and not all Christians, and certainly not Christian theologians, could draw up secular programmes for secular ends, approval of which the Church would then prescribe to its members.

I think that *Civis* is confused about the nature of Christian duty in social affairs; and where there is confusion, it is very likely that there will be a difference of interpretation: the author may seem to himself to have said one thing, and to the reader to have said another. When this happens, the reader is justified in basing his interpretation partly upon the tone in which the author speaks. I find the tone of *Civis* very disquieting: it evinces a certain imperiousness and impatience. The business man, for instance, will not respond with an immediate cordial glow to one who tells him so peremptorily that he "must abandon the mixed feelings of fear and contempt" towards the State: I am myself a small business man, and if I am not *wholly* culpable for having sometimes cherished such base passions in the past (and if not towards the State in the abstract, at least towards some particular department of State) I do not see why I should make a vow never to entertain them again, merely because a certain measure has become law. I think it is only frank to say this, to make clear that I am somewhat disturbed by the inspiration of this paper as well as by the course of reasoning. But I believe also that the author raises issues which are beyond the competence of the layman, however skilled in economics, and however sincere, devout and zealous in his Christianity—issues which are only to be considered by expert and authoritative theological minds. For I have very little doubt that if we accept the prescriptions of *Civis* for the attitude we are to adopt towards the Full Employment scheme, we shall find ourselves compelled to accept them for one social reform after another; the function of the Church will become merged into that of the State; the Christian will lose the sense of that loyalty which sometimes conflicts with, and always transcends, that to the State; the distinction between the eternal and the temporal will fall into desuetude; and we shall be well on the way to the religion of the State.

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